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Moera (the manager of the world, handling social matters of right and reason, and answerable to no deity) was having a rough day. For the first time in eternity she actually took an evening off...she had a date with a human...and chaos erupts. She had left Fate in charge for the night. She really should have known better than to trust her.

Fate had created a prophecy several weeks ago, and dispatched it using one of her lesser oracles, and, despite Moera's commands, had shifted the balance of good and evil.

Moera did not intend for that particular prophecy to begin its fulfillment for many years.

Fate allowed two people to die before their time. That one mistake could cause evil to reign forever. Fate had always been impulsive; after all, her twin brother was Chance. She had acted without looking to the future to see what her actions could cause.

Moera paced back and forth watching the man who would shape the future of all...Albus Dumbledore.

Albus Dumbledore had a migraine. He had just been to Godric's Hollow, which was in ruins. How Harry had survived not only the killing curse, but the house collapsing was a miracle.

Harry had always been unusually powerful. Most witches and wizards didn't start to show signs of magic until they were three, but Harry had been using his from the time he was three months old. He would often summon things he wanted, and cause glass to explode when he was upset. Still...babies were not often capable of the level of magic Harry had shown.

Now the only question was, 'Where will Harry live?' As his godfather was about to go to prison for the betrayal of his parents, there was only two options left. One: Harry could go to live with his mother's sister's family, muggles. Or Two: He could go to live with his nearest

Potter relation, Aurora Prewitt Diggory. Harry's grandfather had a sister, and Aurora was her daughter.

Dumbledore had in fact called a meeting with the two people that he trusted above all others. Minerva McGonagall was his best friend, and the love of his life (not that he ever told her that). Severus Snape, out of fear for his best friend's life, had turned to the Light, making an Unbreakable Vow of loyalty to Dumbledore. These two people would help Dumbledore decide the fate of the boy-who-lived.

Knock Knock

"Come in Minerva."

"Hmph," the slender black-haired witch said, "It drives me mental when you do that."

"Ah, well...it is a talent...Lemon Drop?" the Headmaster said, his eyes twinkling.

"No, thank-you," she said primly. She conjured a wooden straight-backed chair, and sat down. "Will anyone else be here for this discussion?"

"Yes, Severus should be arriving momentarily." Just then the fire turned green, and out stepped a tall black-haired, hook-nosed man.

"Albus...Minerva," he said, nodding his head in greeting.

"Severus," Albus said, "Please be seated, we have a lot to discuss. We are here to discuss where Harry should be placed...with his mother's muggle sister, or with his father's cousin, Aurora Diggory. I am worried that, if he were to be raised in the magical world, all of the attention would go to his head. Because of this, I am leaning toward sending him to his muggle aunt. What do you think?"

Severus sneered and answered, "That sounds best to me. The last thing the world needs is another arrogant Potter."

"You can't be serious?" Minerva said, "Lily told me all about her sister. Harry will be neglected at best, but more likely abused by her."

"Now, now, Minerva, I really don't think that she would be capable of harming her own nephew," Albus said, with a twinkle in his eyes that clearly said, 'I know better than you.'

"Well...If your sure..." she said.

"It's decided. Harry shall live in the muggle world."

Moera stopped pacing and glared at the image of Dumbledore. That decision could only have bad results.

She turned to look into the pool of 'What Will Be' that was continuously changing. What she saw terrified her.

She had to do something. She called a meeting with Athena (goddess of wisdom and war), Nike (goddess of victory), Eros (god of love), and Anteros (god of reciprocated love).

Moera looked around the room gazing into the eyes of each person. "Friends, we are meeting here to discuss the future of Harry Potter. The mortals in charge of his life are going to send him to his mother's family. If you will all look into the pool, you will see why this is a terrible decision. We must convince them to send him to Aurora Diggory."

Athena was the first to speak. "Nike, you determine victory, do you think we should interfere?"

"We should. If we do not, Eros and Anteros will die. Should Riddle win, there will be no love left."

The men looked at each other, and said in unison, "We agree with Nike."

"So be it," Athena said. "I will give you the means to change their decision, Moera. I will send to you, from past and future, those who

can change this decision. May your task have the desired results, My Friend."

As the three professors stood up to leave, there was a blinding white flash of light. They were now standing in a large marble room that had columns in a circle around the edges. A large circular table sat in the very center of the room.

A tall slender woman stood behind one of the chairs at the table. Her blonde curls were piled on her head, and she looked both very old and very young. "Please be seated. My name is Moera. I am here because of Fate. She made a mistake, but you are about to make a worse one. Heed all that shall occur here or Darkness will win."

Minerva and Severus looked at Albus, determined to follow his lead.

"Moera, we will be honored to hear what you have to say," Dumbledore said.

The three professors sat at the table.

Five years previously...

Four boys were walking from transfiguration to the Great Hall and talking. Their names were Sirius Black, James Potter, Remus Lupin, and Peter Pettigrew.

"Oy, James, lets play a prank on Snivellus," Sirius said, practically bouncing in excitement.

"No, Sirius," James said exasperated. "Lily only just agreed to go out with me, and you know how she feels about us pranking him. Besides, he hasn't done anything to warrant it."

Lily Evans had been walking, unnoticed, about five feet behind them. Her face lit up when she heard James' response. She hurried up to him, and kissed him on the cheek, saying, "I am so proud of you, James."

A moment later, there was a bright white flash of light, and three of the boys and Lily were gone.

Peter looked around in confusion, scratching his head. "Why am I always left behind," he moaned.

Fourteen and a half years after the professors were taken...

Six friends were sharing a compartment on the Hogwarts Express. As the train pulled out of the station to go to London, there was a brilliant flash of light and they disappeared.

Meanwhile, two cars down, a slender aristocratic blonde-haired boy was enjoying his final few hours of freedom before going home for the summer. He had managed to get a compartment to himself by complaining of a migraine. One flash of light later, and he was gone.

Back in the marble room...

Three boys and a girl appeared out of thin air.

Lily Evans looked at the table and screamed. She jumped into James Potter's arms in fright. "Severus is there...table...older...bloody hell."

At her words, the three boys looked at the other people in the room.

"Bloody hell is right," Sirius muttered under his breath.

Remus decided to find out what was going on. Sirius was in shock, and James was trying to calm Lily down. "Err...Professor Dumbledore, what is going on?"

"Ah, yes...this lady is Moera. Apparently Fate made a mistake, and we have been brought here to change what could be a terrible future," Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling.

"Ooookaaaay...," James said. He led the group to the table, and pulled out a chair for Lily before sitting down next to her.

Just as they had all been seated, seven people appeared.

The blonde boy looked at the other six people with him. “Potter! What the bloody hell did you do!?”

The boy with the messy black hair turned to face him, “Malfoy, what makes you think that I did this? I don’t go looking for weird stuff to happen around or to me. I am just as confused as you are.”

The blonde girl stepped between the two boys and said, “Calm down, boys. I think you are both letting the blue-nosed flutters get to you.”

“The what!?” Malfoy said angrily.

“Don’t ask,” Harry said then, turning to Luna, said, “Thanks, Luna. I really shouldn’t let them affect me.”

She beamed up at him.

Harry looked at the table and said, “Well hell just froze over. Severus Snape is sitting at the same table as Sirius Black, and nobody has been murdered yet.”

Moera laughed. “Please sit down everyone. We have much to discuss.”

Remus asked what all of the Marauders were wondering, “Erm...why did none of you ask what you’re doing here?”

Harry answered for all of them. “What’s the point? I mean, weird events happen to me all the time; this is actually quite tame for my life. This is nothing compared to the year of the Cerberos and the baby dragon.”

“Or the year of the diary of doom,” Ginny said.

“Let’s not forget the year of the Azkaban escapee,” Hermione added.

Ron then joined in with, “Or the year of Moldyshort’s return.”

Harry finished by saying, "And lastly the year of sharing Riddle's mind." He shuddered.

Moera decided that it was time to get on with why they were there. "Why don't we start by introducing ourselves, and saying a fact about who we are. I am Moera; I manage the world, handling social matters of right and reason."

"I am Severus Snape: ex-Death Eater, current spy for the Light, and Potions professor at Hogwarts," Severus sneered.

"Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, and I like Lemon Drops."

A bowl of Lemon Drops appeared in front of him. He popped one into his mouth and hummed a little in enjoyment.

"Minerva McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts, I am also a cat animagus."

Lily smiled brightly and said, "My name is Lily Evans."

Harry's eyes went wide.

Lily continued, "I am good at charms and potions, and I am Head Girl."

"James Potter, otherwise known as Prongs, Head Boy, and my Lily-flower agreed to go on our first date this weekend." James grinned goofily.

Sirius grinned and said, "Padfoot, otherwise known as Sirius Orion Black, and I am the first Black ever to be sorted into Gryffindor."

"I am Remus John Lupin, prefect, and...erm...I'm known as Moony."

Harry looked at Remus and said, "We all already know about your furry little problem and don't care...well...except for Malfoy."

Remus smiled at him.

Harry then said, "I'm Harry James Potter, son of Lily Evans and James Potter." There were gasps from the seventeen year olds. "I am UNFORTUNATELY known as the boy-who-lived, and all I want is to be just Harry." He looked depressed.

Lily struggled to keep from crying at how sad her son looked. She had no doubts that that was her and James' baby boy.

Ginny hugged Harry, who muttered 'thanks, Gin'.

"I'm Ginny Weasley, I have six older brothers, and Harry saved my life in my first year at Hogwarts." She smiled softly.

Hermione practically bounced as she introduced herself. "Hermione Granger, muggle-born, and I'm best friends with Harry and Ron...oh, and contrary to popular opinion," she glared at Ron, "I am, in fact, a GIRL."

Ron cowered under her glare. "Erm, I am Ron Weasley, Ginny's my little sister, and I will never trust any boys but Harry with her."

"Thanks, Ron," Harry said, "So, Ginny, willyougooutwithmewhenwegethome?"

"What?" Ginny asked, not understanding him.

Harry blushed, "I...erm...said, 'Ginny, will you go out with me when we get home?'"

"Yes!!" the red-haired girl squealed, throwing her arms around his neck, and kissing him on the cheek.

Harry grinned goofily.

Severus scowled and asked, "What is with Potters and red-heads?"

"Eros placed a charm on the Potter males so that they will only ever love red-heads," Moera said.

"That'll do it," Snape muttered.

"Let us continue," Moera said.

Neville, blushed, saying, "I'm Neville Longbottom, son of Alice and Frank. I was raised by my Gran after my parents were tortured to insanity by Death Eaters."

"I am Luna Lovegood, and I aspire to meet aliens from another planet."

Everyone could hear crickets chirping, it was that quiet.

Draco rolled his eyes and said, "Draco Malfoy, Severus is my godfather, and I hate my dad."

More crickets.

Then...

BANG!!

"You said!"

"No you said!"

They were identical voices.

Laughter could be heard as the two voices continued to argue. An archway appeared on one of the walls, and man entered carrying two teenagers by the back of their robes. The man continued laughing as he dropped them on the floor near the table.

As he turned to leave, Moera said, "Thank you, Hermes." He just waved in response. As soon as he passed under the arch it disappeared.

The two boys picked themselves up dusting off their robes.

Cries of "Fred, George!!" came from half of the table.

"Hello, All..."

"So, what did we miss?"

Moera laughed, "Just introductions." Two more chairs appeared in between Neville and Luna.

The two sat down, and everyone reintroduced themselves. When they got to Fred, he turned toward Harry. "Oy, Harry, didja forget to mention something to us?"

Harry turned red, "No, you just never asked me if I knew who the Marauders were." Harry noticed the puzzled looks on the Marauders' faces and told them. "Gred and Forge here were the ones to give me the Marauders Map."

"Why didn't I give it to you?" James asked, puzzled.

"You didn't have it. It was marauded from Filch's file cabinet in the twin's first year."

"Ah, that would do it."

"Anyway..." Fred drawled, "I'm Fred Weasley, one half of the infamous prankster team of Weasley and Weasley. We have started a joke shop, and all thanks go to our anonymous investor."

"I'm George, and everything Fred said applies to me as well. Oh, and by the way Harry, thanks for investing in our joke shop."

Harry groaned, and buried his head in his hands. Hermione was crying out 'how could you', and Lily yelling 'Oh Merlin, he's just like his father, isn't he'. Minerva and Severus were both yelling 'NO!!' at the top of their lungs.

Moera stood and said, "It's time to get down to business."

"Why am I here

"Why am I here?" Draco drawled. "I have no desire to hear about the amazing life of the boy-who-lived."

"You are here to change your destiny Mr. Malfoy. If you do not listen and learn, then your fate will remain the same. Your future involves Mad-Eye Moody, a female brown ferret, and a muggle girl who will name you 'Kitty'."

Malfoy shuddered, "Point taken."

Moera cleared her throat, and began, "First let me inform you that you James, and you Lily died when Harry was only a year old."

"NO!" James cried out, "Not Lily!"

Lily began to cry, "I'll never get to see my baby grow up."

James began to comfort her. When she was calm, Moera continued.

"We are here to decide where Harry should live."

"With Sirius of course," James said. "He's the only person I would name as godfather."

"Alas," Albus began, "He betrayed you to Voldemort."

"No he didn't!" Harry yelled.

"Mr. Potter, please sit down. I cannot allow you to complete your train of thought. Certain things must remain as they are," Moera said. "The fact remains that Sirius is unable to raise you at this time. The choices are Petunia Dursley or Aurora Diggory."

"My son cannot go to live with my sister! She'll beat him!" Lily screamed. In fact, she started screaming to Petunia even though she wasn't there.

Harry dashed around the table, turned his mom to face him and softly said, "Okay, Mum, just take a deep breath...good...one more...good. It's no use yelling, Aunt Petunia can't hear you right now. I promise, that once you get back, you can yell at her all you like. Okay?"

Lily's face had returned to its natural color while Harry was talking. "Okay, Harry," she said softly. She hugged him long and hard before allowing him to return to his seat.

"Whoa, Harry, where did you learn how to do that? I've never seen anyone calm Lily down that quickly before," James asked in awe.

"I'm good at staying calm in stressful situations," Harry muttered.

"Let us continue!" Moera said, looking stressed. "Athena...I need help here!" A book appeared out of nowhere, much to her relief. "Ooh, that'll help. Thank you, Athena," she said. "I will aid you in the decision making process by reading the story of Harry's future, as told by J. K. Rowling..."

Chapter One: The Boy Who Lived

"Wait...that's Harry!" Sirius said bouncing in his seat.

"Oh, Merlin, why do you hate me? I thought I was finally rid of the dunderhead," Severus muttered. "I need firewhiskey." A bottle of amber liquid appeared on the table in front of him. "Bless you, whoever took pity on me."

Moera continued.

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Private Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense.

Harry's face paled, "Oh, Merlin, I think I'm going to be sick."

"You're not the only one," one of the twins muttered.

Mr. Dursley was the director of a firm called Grunnings, which made drills.

Sirius threw his hand up and said, "I have a question...what are drills?"

"They're muggle tools that are used to put holes into things like wood?" Lily answered.

"Oookaaay, muggles are weird," Draco said, a skeptical look on his face.

He was a big beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large mustache. Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde, and had nearly twice the amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbors.

"Noooo," Lily screamed. "It's...it's...my sister."

Severus shuddered. He remembered her.

The Dursleys had a small son called Dudley and in their opinion there was no finer boy anywhere.

"Woah, you mean Dudley was actually small once? I thought he was born the size of a baby killer whale," Harry said.

Snickers were heard from the family of red-heads.

The Dursleys had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it. They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters. Mrs. Potter was Mrs. Dursley's sister, but they hadn't met for several years; in fact Mrs. Dursley pretended that she didn't have a sister, because her sister and her good-for-nothing husband were as unDursleyish as it was possible to be.

"What the bloody hell do they mean good-for-nothing?" James yelled.
"I am not good-for-nothing!"

"You could have fooled me," Severus muttered, taking another swig from his bottle.

"James, I don't think you're good-for-nothing. You like taking care of people, and that says a lot about your character," Lily said.

Sirius spoke up, "Yeah, look at all you've done for Remy and me. You adopted me as your brother when my family disowned me. And you supported Remus when a lot of people coughBlackscough would have abandoned him."

"Thank you guys," James said, blushing slightly.

"Shall we continue," Moera asked.

"Yes, Ma'am," the Marauders said as one, all using a sarcastic tone of voice.

The Dursley's shuddered to think what the neighbors would say if the Potters arrived in the street. The Dursleys knew that the Potters had a small son, too, but they had never even seen him. This boy was another good reason for keeping the Potters away; they didn't want Dudley mixing with a child like that.

"A child like what exactly!" Lily snapped. Her face turned a dangerous shade of red.

"Here, Lily, have some firewhiskey," Severus offered, handing her the bottle. Lily took a long drink before handing it back.

"Thanks, Sev."

When Mr. and Mrs. Dursley woke up on the dull, gray Tuesday our story starts, there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be happening all over the country. Mr. Dursley hummed as he picked out his most boring tie for work, and Mrs. Dursley gossiped away happily as she wrestled a screaming Dudley into his highchair.

None of them noticed a large tawny owl flutter past the window.

"GO OWLS!" Fred and George yelled simultaneously, punching the air above them in a way that was reminiscent of cheerleaders.

At half past eight, Mr. Dursley picked up his briefcase, pecked Mrs. Dursley on the cheek, and tried to kiss Dudley good-bye but missed, because Dudley was now having a tantrum and throwing his cereal at the walls. "Little tyke," chortled Mr. Dursley as...

"Little tyke?!" every male under the age of thirty questioned loudly, all looking at Harry.

"What?? I wasn't the one who said it you know?" Harry said, "Besides, it's better than Dinky-Diddydums."

Every male, including Dumbledore shuddered at this.

"No wonder the kid has issues," Fred said.

"Yeah, I reckon that would screw anyone up for life," George agreed.

Moera began again.

...as he left the house. He got into his car and backed out of number four's drive.

It was on the corner of the street that he noticed the first sign of something peculiar – a cat reading a map.

"Go, McGonagall," the twins cried with another cheerleader type jump.

For a second, Mr. Dursley didn't realize what he had seen – then he jerked his around to look again. There was a tabby cat standing on the corner of Private Drive, but there wasn't a map in sight. What could he have been thinking of? It must have been a trick of the light. Mr. Dursley blinked and stared at the cat. It stared back. As Mr. Dursley drove around the corner and up the road, he watched the cat in his mirror. It was now reading the sign that said Private Drive – no, looking at the sign; cats couldn't read maps or signs. Mr. Dursley

gave himself a little shake and put the cat out of his mind. As he drove toward town he thought of nothing except a large order of drills he was hoping to get that day.

"And I thought Crabbe and Goyle were thick," Draco muttered.

But on the edge of town, drills were driven out of his mind by something else. As he sat in the usual morning traffic jam, he couldn't help noticing that there were a lot of strangely dressed people about. People in cloaks. Mr. Dursley couldn't bear people who dressed in funny clothes – the getups you saw on young people! He supposed this was some stupid new fashion. He drummed his fingers on the steering wheel and his eyes fell on a group of these weirdos standing quite close by. They were whispering excitedly together. Mr. Dursley was enraged to see that a couple of them weren't young at all; why, that man had to be older than he was, and wearing an emerald green cloak! The nerve of him! But then it struck Mr. Dursley that this was probably some silly stunt – these people were obviously collecting for something...yes, that would be it. The traffic moved on and a few minutes later, Mr. Dursley arrived in the Grunnings parking lot, his mind back on drills.

"Weirdos, Hmph," Severus muttered. He downed the rest of his firewhiskey, tossed the empty bottle over his shoulder and grabbed the full bottle that appeared in front of him.

Mr. Dursley always sat with his back to the window in his office on the ninth floor. If he hadn't, he might have found it a little harder to concentrate on drills that morning. He didn't see the owls swooping past in broad daylight, though people down in the street did; they pointed and gazed open-mouthed as owl after owl sped overhead. Most of them had never seen an owl, even at nighttime. Mr. Dursley, however, had a perfectly normal, owl-free morning. He yelled at five different people. He made several important telephone calls and shouted a bit more. He was in a very good mood until lunchtime, when he thought he'd stretch his legs and walk across the road to buy himself a bun from the bakery.

He'd forgotten all about the people in cloaks until he passed a group of them next to the baker's. He eyed them angrily as he passed. He

didn't know why, but they made him uneasy. This bunch were whispering excitedly, too, and he couldn't see a single collecting tin. It was on his way back past them, clutching a large doughnut in a bag, that he caught a few words of what they were saying.

"The Potters, that's right, that's what I heard – "

" – Yes, their son, Harry – "

"Their son, Harry, WHAT? What happened?" James cried out.

"Shh," Lily said rubbing James' arm, "It's okay, we'll find out soon."

Moera cleared her throat again.

Mr. Dursley stopped dead.

"Wish he'd drop dead," Severus muttered. "He's got to be the most boring muggle ever."

Fear flooded him. He looked back at the whisperers as though he wanted to say something to them, but though better of it.

"Thank Merlin, I don't think they would have survived the conversation without falling asleep," Severus said.

He dashed back across the road, hurried up to his office, snapped at his secretary not to disturb him, seized his telephone,

"Question...What is a telephone?" Malfoy asked.

"It works like a floo call, minus the fireplace and floo powder, and you can't actually see the persons head. You just hear their voice," Hermione answered.

"Ah...You know that actually sounds interesting. I mean...there is nothing worse than getting ash in your hair. Honestly, it's a nightmare...it just sticks to my hair gel like...like a permanent sticking charm was on it."

"Tonight on your local news...ten generations of Blacks and fourteen of Malfoys rolled over in their graves. The impossible occurred when the Malfoy heir stated that he found something about muggles interesting." Severus gave an impressive performance of a muggle news anchor.

Harry grinned, "Also in tonight's local news. The entire school of Hogwarts, along with many graduates died tonight because of a freak occurrence. Apparently, Severus Snape, the formidable potions master, made a joke...not just any joke, but a funny one that was about muggles. We will bring you more on this story as it happens. I give you now to my associate, Hermione Granger, who is live on the scene...Hermione."

"Thank you, Harry. Today we mourn the loss of so many innocents. Now, let's hear from the brother of one of the victims, Mr. Weasley. Fred?"

"Yes, Hermione, it was just awful, one moment he was standing beside me planning a prank, then we heard...sob...that great joke...it was...was...Professor Snape. George just started laughing...sob...then he stopped and stared in shock at the professor...and he just...just keeled over."

"Thank you, Fred. It is a truly sad day. As they say, 'Only the good die young'. Back to you, Harry."

"We close tonight's program with a moment of silence for those who lost their lives, and for the families that mourn them."

Harry, Hermione, Fred, and the Marauders all bowed their heads.

Severus smirked at the students, and took another swig from his bottle.

Moera continued.

...telephone, and had almost finished dialing his home number when he changed his mind. He put the receiver back down and stroked his mustache, thinking... no, he was being stupid. Potter wasn't such an

unusual name. He was sure there were lots of people called Potter who had a son called Harry. Come to think of it, he wasn't even sure his nephew was called Harry. He'd never even seen the boy. It might have been Harvey. Or Harold. There was just no point in worrying Mrs. Dursley; she always got so upset at any mention of her sister. He didn't blame her — if he'd had a sister like that...but all the same, those people in cloaks...

"A sister like what?" James asked dangerously.

"Prongs, when we get home, let's prank her," Sirius said, uncharacteristically serious.

"I was already planning on it, Padfoot. I think that this calls for prank #102...‘Hell in a Handbasket’."

He found it a lot harder to concentrate on drills that afternoon and when he left the building at five o'clock, he was still so worried that he walked straight into someone just outside the door.

"Sorry," he grunted, as the tiny old man stumbled and almost fell. It was a few seconds before Mr. Dursley realized that the man was wearing a violet cloak. He didn't seem at all upset at being almost knocked to the ground. On the contrary, his face split into a wide smile and he said in a squeaky voice that made passersby stare, "Don't be sorry, my dear sir, for nothing could upset me today! Rejoice, for You-Know-Who has gone at last! Even Muggles like your self should be celebrating, this happy, happy day!"

"Is it true," Remus asked.

"Yes, it's true," Minerva responded sadly.

Lily couldn't help asking, "If it's true then why are you not more excited?"

"Oh, Lily...I just...please, just listen to the story...I'm sure you'll know soon enough," Minerva said, wiping her eyes with Dumbledore's beard.

"I have a bad feeling about this," James and Sirius said together.

Remus groaned, "I never should have taken you to see Star Wars."

And the old man hugged Mr. Dursley around the middle and walked off.

Mr. Dursley stood rooted to the spot. He had been hugged by a complete stranger. He also thought he had been called a Muggle, whatever that was. He was rattled. He hurried to his car and set off for home, hoping he was imagining things, which he had never hoped before, because he didn't approve of imagination.

The five pranksters and Ginny all gasped in horror.

Suddenly, Ginny let out an eardrum bursting scream.

Sirius (as a human) let out an unearthly howl.

Fred and George looked as though they were going to throw-up.

James actually did throw-up.

Remus shook his head and muttered, "Those poor deluded muggles. Such a shame."

Moera waited until the room was silent, and said, "May I continue now?"

As he pulled into the driveway of number four, the first thing he saw — and it didn't improve his mood — was the tabby cat he'd spotted that morning. It was now sitting on his garden wall. He was sure it was the same one; it had the same markings around its eyes.

"Shoo!" said Mr. Dursley loudly.

Minerva bristled, and glared at the book.

"Dursley's in trouble..." the twins sang out.

"She's gonna claw him in the butt, isn't she?" Sirius asked excitedly.

"No, no sane person or cat would want to dirty themselves by touching him...especially in the butt region," Harry said.

"Oy, Potter...I thought that you were all for Muggle equality," Draco said.

"I will explain this once, Malfoy, and only once. There are good muggles and bad muggles, just as there are good wizards and bad wizards. Uncle Vernon is a bad muggle. Voldemort is a bad wizard. If Voldie wasn't so anti-muggle, he and Uncle Vernon would get along smashingly. They both want to kill me after all. Between my uncle hitting me and Voldie crucio-ing me, I'm lucky to still be sane," Harry said.

Luna smiled. "Sanity is a matter of opinion. After all, there are some people who think I'm insane, and we all know that I'm not."

"Right then...on with the story," Malfoy said. He didn't insult her because his father had arranged his marriage to her before he was born. Of course, it was also before Xenophilius Lovegood decided to start The Quibbler.

The cat didn't move. It just gave him a stern look. Was this normal cat behavior?

"It is for Minerva," Dumbledore calmly stated.

"Watch it, Albus. One toe out of line and you'll be sleeping on the couch," Minerva said.

"Yuck...I did not need to hear that," Severus said. He then finished his second bottle of firewhiskey. Unfortunately, he did not get another. Apparently, the person in charge had decided that he was sufficiently sloshed.

"Fred, you owe me five galleons," Ginny said. He passed the coins down to her.

"You bet on whether or not Dumbledore and McGonagall were in a relationship?" Harry asked.

"Don't be ridiculous, Harry. I bet that Dumbledore was getting some. That twinkle is not normal," Ginny said.

The Marauder's burst into laughter.

James looked at Harry and said, "I'm proud of you, Son. You picked a good one."

Harry looked as though he was going to cry. "My dad said that he was proud of me," he whispered. Ginny leaned over and hugged him.

"Oh, Harry, of course your dad is proud of you. You are an amazing person."

"Thanks, Gin," he whispered.

The twins stared in wonder. Harry was the first person, ever, to get away with calling Ginny Gin.

Mr. Dursley wondered. Trying to pull himself together, he let himself into the house. He was still determined not to mention anything to his wife.

Mrs. Dursley had a nice, normal day. She told him over dinner all about Mrs. Next Door's problems with her daughter and how Dudley had learned a new word ("Won't!"). Mr. Dursley tried to act normally. When Dudley had been put to bed, he went into the living room in time to catch the last report on the evening news:

"And finally, bird-watchers everywhere have reported that the nation's owls have been behaving very unusually today. Although owls normally hunt at night and are hardly ever seen in daylight, there have been hundreds of sightings of these birds flying in every direction since sunrise. Experts are unable to explain why the owls have suddenly changed their sleeping pattern." The news caster allowed himself a grin. "Most mysterious. And now, over to Jim

McGuffin with the weather. Going to be anymore showers of owls tonight, Jim?"

"Well, Ted," said the weatherman, "I don't know about that, but it's not only the owls that have been acting oddly today. Viewers as far apart as Kent, Yorkshire, and Dundee have been phoning in to tell me that instead of the rain I promised yesterday, they've had a downpour of shooting stars. Perhaps people have been celebrating Bonfire Night early — it's not until next week folks! But I can promise a wet night tonight."

"Hmph, shooting stars, indeed. I bet you that was Dedalus Diggle. He's never had much sense," Minerva said.

Mr. Dursley sat frozen in his armchair. Shooting stars all over Britain? Owls flying by daylight? Mysterious people in cloaks all over the place? And whisper, a whisper about the Potters...

Mrs. Dursley came into the living room carrying two cups of tea. It was no good. He'd have to say something to her. He cleared his throat nervously. "Err — Petunia, Dear — you haven't heard from your sister lately, have you?"

As he had expected, Mrs. Dursley looked shocked and angry. After all, they normally pretended she didn't have a sister.

"They WHAT!" Lily yelled. "That's low, even for her."

"Watch out, Prongs...she's gonna blow," Sirius said, cowering in his seat.

"Shut up, Padfoot."

"No," she said sharply. "Why?"

"Funny stuff on the news," Mr. Dursley mumbled. "Owls...shooting stars...and there were a lot of funny-looking people in town today..."

"So?" snapped Mrs. Dursley

"Well, I just thought...maybe...it was something to do with...you know...her crowd."

Mrs. Dursley sipped her tea through pursed lips. Mr. Dursley wondered whether he dared tell her he'd heard the name "Potter." He decided he didn't dare. Instead he said, as casually as he could, "Their son — he'd be about Dudley's age now, wouldn't he?"

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Dursley stiffly.

"What's his name again? Howard, isn't it?"

"Harry. Nasty common name, if you asked me."

"I like that name," Lily said. "It's not stuffy like Harold."

"You'd think that they'd like my name BECAUSE it's common. I mean, if I'd been named Orion I'd understand them being upset, because Orion is a strange name in the Muggle world," Harry said.

"Hey! I like the name Orion!" Sirius said.

"Yeah, but Petunia thinks that you're a freak," Lily said.

"Wait...I thought they made up that name especially for me," Harry said.

"They called you a FREAK!" James yelled in shock.

"Yeah...up until I went to primary school I thought it was my name...well...that or Boy."

"Lily, will you come visit me in Azkaban if I murder your sister," James asked.

"James, I won't have to visit. I will be sharing your cell for using the Cruciatus curse on her."

"I love you, Lily."

"I love you too, James."

James' eyes went wide, and his mouth fell open in shock. Lily loved him. A goofy grin spread across his face. "She loves me...Padfoot, Moony, did you hear...she loves me!"

"Yeah, Prongs, we heard. Way to go, mate," Remus said, grinning at his best friend.

Moera rolled her eyes. This was going to take forever.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Dursley, his heart sinking horribly. "Yes, I quite agree."

He didn't say another word on the subject as they went upstairs to bed. While Mrs. Dursley was in the bathroom, Mr. Dursley crept to the bedroom window and peered down into the front garden. The cat was still there. It was staring down Privet Drive as though it were waiting for something.

Was he imagining things? Could all this have anything to do with the Potters? If it did...if it got out that they were related to a pair of — well, he didn't think he could bear it.

The Dursley's got into bed. Mrs. Dursley fell asleep quickly but Mr. Dursley lay awake, turning it all over in his mind. His last, comforting thought before he fell asleep was that even if the Potters were involved, there was no reason for them to come near him and Mrs. Dursley. The Potters knew very well what he and Petunia thought about them and their kind...He couldn't see how he and Petunia could get mixed up in anything that might be going on — he yawned and turned over — it couldn't affect them...

How very wrong he was.

Mr. Dursley might have been drifting into an uneasy sleep, but the cat on the wall outside was showing no sign of sleepiness. It was sitting as still as a statue, its eyes fixed unblinkingly on the far corner of Privet Drive. It didn't so much as quiver when a car door slammed on

the next street, nor when two owls swooped overhead. In fact, it was nearly midnight before the cat moved at all.

A man appeared on the corner the cat had been watching, appeared so suddenly and silently you'd have thought he'd just popped out of the ground.

"Apparition," Harry said matter-of-factly. "Much nicer than flooing."

The cat's tail twitched and its eyes narrowed.

Nothing like this man had ever been seen on Privet Drive. He was tall, thin, and very old, judging by the silver of his hair and beard, which were both long enough to tuck into his belt. He was wearing long robes, a purple cloak that swept the ground, and high-heeled, buckled boots. His blue eyes were light, bright, and sparkling behind half-moon spectacles and his nose was very long and crooked, as though it had been broken at least twice. This man's name was Albus Dumbledore.

"Ms. Rowling did do a wonderful job of describing me didn't she?" Albus asked no one in particular.

"Oh, yes, she did a brilliant job. She just forgot to mention one little detail. What was it again? Oh yeah, your arrogance," Minerva muttered.

Albus Dumbledore didn't seem to realize that he had just arrived in a street where everything from his name to his boots was unwelcome. He was busy rummaging in his cloak, looking for something. But he did seem to realize he was being watched, because he looked up suddenly at the cat, which was still staring at him from the other end of the street. For some reason, the sight of the cat seemed to amuse him. He chuckled and muttered, "I should have known."

"Hey, Min-min," Sirius started to say.

"Call me Min-min one more time, and you will be hanging by your toenails in the dungeons."

"Oookaaay...Hey, McGee?"

Minerva's lips twitched. "What, Sirius?"

"Theoretically speaking...if I were to become an animagus dog, would you play tag with me in animal form?"

"You did say theoretically...Correct?" she questioned, her eyes narrowed.

Sirius smiled in an endearing manner. "Of course, I did. I couldn't possibly hope to hide something like that from you."

Minerva relaxed slightly. "In that case...I might consider it."

Gasps were heard around the table.

He found what he was looking for in his inside pocket. It seemed to be a silver cigarette lighter. He flicked it open, held it up in the air, and clicked it. The nearest street lamp went out with a little pop.

"Cool," Harry whispered. "Hey, Professor Dumbledore, theoretically speaking, how much would one of those cost? And where would you get one?"

Albus Dumbledore chuckled. "I am afraid, dear boy, that I have the only one in existence. However, you will be pleased to know that I am leaving it to you in my will."

"Yeah, but the problem with that is that you have to be dead in order for me to have it. I'd rather have you alive," Harry said.

Albus wiped a tear from his eye. "I'm honored that you feel that way."

He clicked it again — the next lamp flickered into darkness. Twelve times he clicked the Put-Outer, until the only lights left on the whole street were two pinpricks in the distance, which were the eyes of the cat watching him. If anyone looked out of their window now, even beady-eyed Mrs. Dursley, they wouldn't be able to see anything that was happening down on the pavement. Dumbledore slipped the Put-

Outer back inside his cloak and set off down the street toward number four, where he sat down on the wall next to the cat. He didn't look at it, but after a moment he spoke to it.

"Fancy seeing you here, Professor McGonagall."

He turned to smile at the tabby, but it had gone. Instead he was smiling at a rather severe-looking woman who was wearing square glasses exactly the shape of the markings the cat had had around its eyes. She, too, was wearing a cloak, an emerald one. Her black hair was drawn into a tight bun. She looked distinctly ruffled.

"How did you know it was me?" she asked.

"My dear Professor, I've never seen a cat sit so stiffly."

"Hmph, I was in cat form all day. Sitting on a brick wall would make anyone stiff," Minerva said.

"You'd be stiff if you'd been sitting on a brick wall all day," said Professor McGonagall

"All day? When you could have been celebrating? I must have passed a dozen feasts and parties on my way here."

Professor McGonagall sniffed angrily.

"Oh, yes, everyone's celebrating, all right," she said impatiently. "You'd think they'd be a bit more careful, but no — even the Muggles have noticed something's going on. It was on their news." She jerked her head at the Dursleys' dark living -room window. "I heard it. Flocks of owls...shooting stars...Well, they're not completely stupid. They were bound to notice something. Shooting stars down in Kent — I'll bet that was Dedalus Diggle he never had much sense."

Everyone stared at Minerva.

"You're a seer," Sirius said. "I bow before you, Oh-Wise-One."

"Oh, shut up," Minerva said.

"You can't blame them," said Dumbledore gently. "We've had precious little to celebrate for eleven years."

"I know that," said Professor McGonagall irritably. "But that's no reason to lose our heads. People are being downright careless, out on the streets in broad daylight, not even dressed in Muggle clothes, swapping rumors."

She threw a sharp, sideways glance at Dumbledore here, as though hoping he was going to tell her something, but he didn't, so she went on. "A fine thing it would be if, on the very day You-Know-Who seems to have disappeared at last, the muggles found out about us all. I suppose he really has gone, Dumbledore?"

"It certainly seems so," said Dumbledore. "We have much to be thankful for. Would you care for a lemon drop?"

"A what?"

"A lemon drop. They're a kind of Muggle sweet I'm rather fond of."

"No, thank you," said Professor McGonagall coldly, as though she didn't think this was the moment for lemon drops.

"It really wasn't the right time for you to offer one," Minerva said.

"As I say, even if You-Know-Who has gone —"

"My dear Professor, surely a sensible person like yourself can call him by his name? All this 'You-Know-Who' nonsense — for eleven years I have been trying to persuade people to call him by his proper name: Voldemort." Professor McGonagall flinched, but Dumbledore, who was unsticking two lemon drops, seemed not to notice. "It all gets so confusing if we keep saying 'You-Know-Who.' I have never seen any reason to be frightened of saying Voldemort's name."

"I know you haven't," said professor McGonagall, sounding half exasperated, half admiring. "But you're different. Everyone knows

you're the only one You-Know-oh, all right, Voldemort, was frightened of."

"You flatter me," said Dumbledore calmly. "Voldemort had powers I will never have."

"Only because you're too — well — noble to use them."

"Aww," Fred said. "Someone's got a crush."

McGonagall hissed at him, scaring everyone at the table.

"It's lucky it's dark. I haven't blushed so much since Madam Pomfrey told me she liked my new earmuffs."

James and Sirius began to snicker at the idea of Dumbledore blushing about earmuffs.

Professor McGonagall shot a sharp look at Dumbledore and said, "The owls are nothing next to the rumors that are flying around. You know what everyone's saying? About why he's disappeared? About what finally stopped him?"

It seemed that Professor McGonagall had reached the point she was most anxious to discuss, the real reason she had been waiting on a cold, hard wall all day, for neither as a cat nor as a woman had she fixed Dumbledore with such a piercing stare as she did now. It was plain that whatever "everyone" was saying, she was not going to believe it until Dumbledore told her it was true. Dumbledore however was choosing another lemon drop and did not answer.

"What they're saying," she pressed on, "Is that last night Voldemort turned up in Godric's Hollow. He went to find the Potters. The rumor is that Lily and James Potter are — are — that they're — dead."

James and Lily paled. Even though Moera had told them that they would die, it was just now sinking in that they had less than five years to live.

James looked at Lily. "Lily, seeing as we haven't got much time..." He got down on one knee in front of her chair. "Will you marry me?"

"Yes," she whispered, tears pouring down her face.

James pulled the Potter signet ring from the index finger of his right hand, and slid it onto her hand. It shrank to fit her. James cleared his throat. "When we get back, I'll buy you a real engagement ring."

"I love you, James."

"I love you too, my Lily," he whispered embracing and kissing her.

Moera smiled, and when the newly engaged couple nodded, she continued reading.

Dumbledore bowed his head. Professor McGonagall gasped.

"Lily and James... I can't believe it...I didn't want to believe it...Oh, Albus..."

Dumbledore reached out and patted her on the shoulder. "I know... I know..." he said heavily.

Professor McGonagall's voice trembled as she went on. "That's not all. They're saying he tried to kill the Potter's son, Harry. But — he couldn't. He couldn't kill that little boy. No one knows why, or how, but they're saying that when he couldn't kill Harry Potter, Voldemort's power somehow broke — and that's why he's gone."

Sirius stared at his godson. "Damn, how powerful are you, Harry?"

"It had nothing to do with ME," Harry said. "Mum died to protect me. When she did that, her love formed some sort of protection for me."

"Wow, Lily is awesome," Sirius murmured.

Dumbledore nodded glumly.

"It's — it's true?" faltered Professor McGonagall. "After all he's done...all the people he's killed... he couldn't kill a little boy? It's just astounding...of all the things to stop him... but how in the name of heaven did Harry survive?"

"We can only guess," said Dumbledore. "We may never know."

Professor McGonagall pulled out a lace handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes beneath her spectacles. Dumbledore gave a great sniff as he took a golden watch from his pocket and examined it. It was very odd watch. It had twelve hands but no numbers; instead, little planets were moving around the edge. It must have made sense to Dumbledore, though, because he put it back in his pocket and said, "Hagrid's late. I suppose it was he who told you I'd be here, by the way?"

"Yes" said Professor McGonagall. "And I don't suppose you're going to tell me why you're here, of all places?"

"I've come to bring Harry to his aunt and uncle. They're the only family he has left now."

"LIAR," James yelled.

"Why exactly would you have said that he had no family left, when you asked my advice on who he should live with?" Minerva asked.

Dumbledore muttered something that sounded like, "Gunblivetyou."

"What was that? I couldn't hear you."

"I said, 'I was going to Oblivate you.'." He cringed in fear as Minerva glared at him in a way that would make a Basilisk proud.

"You were what?" Minerva said in a deadly whisper. She slowly stood up, still glaring at him and, with a wave of her wand, turned his hair green and his skin silver.

"Now, Minerva, that was just cruel," Severus said.

"You're my hero," Draco said in awe.

Minerva smiled and, sitting down, said, "Thank you."

"You don't mean — you can't mean the people who live here?" cried Professor McGonagall, jumping to her feet and pointing at number four. "Dumbledore — you can't. I've been watching them all day. You couldn't find two people who are less like us. And they've got this son — I saw him kicking his mother all the way up the street, screaming for sweets. Harry Potter come and live here!"

"It's the best place for him," said Dumbledore firmly. "His aunt and uncle will be able to explain everything to him when he's older. I've written them a letter."

"Yeah right...Like they'd ever tell me that my parents were a witch and wizard. That's about as likely to happen as Voldemort declaring his undying love for me," Harry said.

"A letter?" repeated Professor McGonagall faintly, sitting back down on the wall. "Really, Dumbledore, you think you can explain all this in a letter? These people will never understand him! He'll be famous — a legend — I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter day in the future — there will be books written about Harry — every child in our world will know his name!"

"Unfortunately...Absolutely no privacy," Harry muttered.

"Exactly," said Dumbledore, looking very seriously over the top of his half-moon glasses. "It would be enough to turn any boy's head. Famous before he can walk and talk! Famous for something he won't even remember! Can't you see how much better off he'll be, growing up away from all that until he's ready to take it?"

Professor McGonagall opened her mouth, changed her mind, swallowed, and then said, "Yes — yes, you're right, of course. But how is the boy getting here, Dumbledore?" She eyed his cloak suddenly as though she thought he might be hiding Harry underneath it.

"Hagrid's bringing him."

"You think it — wise — to trust Hagrid with something as important as this?"

"I would trust Hagrid with my life," said Dumbledore.

"I do too," the people from the future, and the people from the past all said in unison. The two groups looked at each other, grinning.

"I'm not saying his heart isn't in the right place," said Professor McGonagall grudgingly, "but you can't pretend he's not careless. He does tend to — what was that?"

"You know...I hate to admit it, but she's right," Harry said.

"WHAT!?" Ron yelled. "How can you, of all people, say that?"

"Oh...I don't know...FLUFFY, NORBERT, the Philosopher's Stone, Aragog..."

Ron shuddered.

"...Buckbeak, and Grawp."

"Is anyone else wondering what their talking about," Remus whispered to Sirius.

"Fluffy was the Cerberos. Norbert the Norwegian Ridgeback, he got when he was drunk and playing cards, during which time he told someone the secret on how to get past Fluffy. The Philosopher's Stone was what Fluffy was guarding, and Voldemort was trying to steal it. Aragog is and Acromantula. His kids tried to eat us. Malfoy here insulted Buckbeak the Hippogriff and got injured. He then tried to get Hagrid fired, even though he hadn't been paying attention in class so the injury was his own fault." Harry glared at Draco as though daring him to argue. "And Grawp is Hagrid's younger, full-giant, brother."

James face went ashen, “Bloody hell, you’ve met all of those creatures?”

“Yeah, but the only bad one was Aragog.”

“My son is so brave,” Lily said to Professor McGonagall.

A low rumbling sound had broken the silence around them. It grew steadily louder as they looked up and down the street for some sign of a headlight; it swelled to a roar as they both looked up at the sky — and a huge motorcycle fell out of the air and landed on the road in front of them.

“Ooh, Lily, can I get one...PLEEEASE?” James begged.

“NO, and that is my final answer!”

“I’ll get one James, and you can borrow it,” Sirius offered.

“Awesome, thanks, Siri.”

If the motorcycle was huge, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide. He looked simply too big to be allowed, and so wild — long tangles of bushy black hair and beard hid most of his face, he had hands the size of trash cans lids, and his feet in their leather boots were like baby dolphins. In his vast, muscular arms he was holding a bundle of blankets.

“Hagrid,” said Dumbledore, sounding relieved. “At last. And where did you get that motorcycle?”

“Borrowed it, Professor Dumbledore, sir,” said the giant, climbing carefully off the motorcycle as he spoke. “Young Sirius Black lent it to me. I’ve got him, sir”

“I KNEW IT!” Sirius yelled. “I AM SO COOL!”

“And so modest,” Hermione said, grinning at him.

"No problems, were there?"

"No, sir — house was almost destroyed, but I got him out all right before the Muggles started swarmin' around. He fell asleep as we were flyin' over Bristol."

Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall bent forward over the bundle of blankets. Inside, just visible, was a baby boy, fast asleep. Under a tuft of jet-black hair over his fore head they could see a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lighting.

"Is that where —?" whispered Professor McGonagall.

"Yes" said Dumbledore. "He'll have that scar forever."

Harry groaned and muttered, "Unfortunately."

"Couldn't you do something about it, Dumbledore?"

"Even if I could, I wouldn't. Scars can come in handy. I have one myself above my left knee that is a perfect map of the London Underground.

Everyone turned and stared at Dumbledore.

"I need another drink," Snape said suddenly.

A bottle of water appeared in front of him.

"Oh Ha Ha Ha," he said snarkily.

"Well — give him here, Hagrid — we'd better get this over with."

Dumbledore took Harry in his arms and turned toward the Dursleys' house

"Could I — Could I say good-bye to him, sir?" asked Hagrid. He bent his great, shaggy head over Harry and gave him what must have been a very scratchy, whiskery kiss. Then, suddenly, Hagrid let out a howl like a wounded dog.

"Poor Hagrid," Ginny whispered softly.

"Shhh!" hissed Professor McGonagall, "you'll wake the Muggles!"

"S-s-sorry," sobbed Hagrid, taking out a large, spotted handkerchief and burying his face in it. "But I c-c-can't stand it — Lily an' James dead — an' poor little Harry off ter live with Muggles —"

"Yes, yes, it's all very sad, but get a grip on yourself, Hagrid, or we'll be found," Professor McGonagall whispered, patting Hagrid gingerly on the arm as Dumbledore stepped over the low garden wall and walked to the front door. He laid Harry gently on the doorstep, took a letter out of his cloak, tucked it inside Harry's blankets, and then came back to the other two. For a full minute the three of them stood and looked at the little bundle; Hagrid's shoulders shook, Professor McGonagall blinked furiously, and the twinkling light that usually shone from Dumbledore's eyes seemed to have gone out."

"Well," said Dumbledore finally, "that's that. We've no business staying here. We may as well go and join the celebrations."

"Yeah," said Hagrid in a very muffled voice, "I'll be takin' Sirius his bike back. G'nite, Professor McGonagall — Professor Dumbledore, sir."

Wiping his streaming eyes on his jacket sleeve, Hagrid swung himself onto the motorcycle and kicked the engine into life; with a roar it rose into the air and off into the night.

"I shall see you soon, I expect, Professor McGonagall," said Dumbledore, nodding to her. Professor McGonagall blew her nose in reply.

Dumbledore turned and walked back down the street. On the corner he stopped and took out the silver Put-Outer. He clicked it once, and twelve balls of light sped back to their street lamps so that Privet Drive glowed suddenly orange and he could make out a tabby cat slinking around the corner at the other end of the street. He could just see the bundle of blankets on the step of number four.

"Good luck, Harry," he murmured. He turned on his heel and with a swish of his cloak, he was gone.

A breeze ruffled the neat hedges of Privet Drive, which lay silent and tidy under the inky sky, the very last place you would expect astonishing thing to happen. Harry Potter rolled over inside his blankets without waking up. One small hand closed on the letter beside him and he slept on, not knowing he was special, not knowing he was famous, not knowing he would be woken in a few hours' time by Mrs. Dursley's scream as she opened the front door to put out the milk bottles, nor that he would spend the next few weeks being prodded and pinched by his cousin Dudley...He couldn't know that at this very moment, people meeting in secret all over the country were holding up their glasses and saying in hushed voices: "To Harry Potter — the boy who lived!"

"That's the end of the first chapter," Moera said. "I dare not hope that the second will go any faster...Now...I have a date. That means that you will each have to take a turn at reading a chapter. That means you go first Severus. I'll be back later. Bye." She dashed out an archway that immediately disappeared again.

Severus groaned. "If I'm going to read, then the powers-that-be had better give me some firewhiskey.

A fresh bottle appeared.

"Thank-you," he said curtly.

10 points to the house of your choice if you can guess what movie 'Hell in a Handbasket' came from; and an extra twenty points to the one who can give the name of the actor who said it.

